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ABSTRACT

In 1997, concurrent with their internships, nine administrative candidates, all women who differed in age, ethnicity, and school experience, participated in a research project focused on the structural, cultural, political, and symbolic differences that divide teachers and administrators. Through an ongoing series of individual interviews, focus group discussions, and journal entries, the pre-service administrators, participating as co-researchers, collected and shared observations of relationships they saw within their internships, discussing the messages that interns received about the relationship between teachers and administrators. This paper examines the research process as an exercise in reflective practice, illustrating its impact in connecting theory and practice in the internship. When interns entered the study, they were well aware of the gap between teachers and administrators, but by the time they finished the process, they had a far more detailed understanding of how that type of relationship developed. They clearly saw the difference between the formal theory they were studying and the informal theories that affected behavior in the workplace. By examining the assumptions and behaviors of others, they became very sensitive to their own practice and began to assess and modify their own behavior. (Contains 12 references.) (SM)

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Reshaping the Administrative Internship through Research and Reflective Practice

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and that the internship, through the process of socialization, actually serves to maintain rather than challenge the status quo. Collaborative leadership is a case in point.

Much of the current research on school leadership emphasizes the importance of collegiality and collaboration. This research is reflected in current reforms calling for shared decision making among the various school constituencies (parents, students, teachers, administrators, and community members). Regardless of how assiduously reformers, policy makers, and researchers encourage collegial and collaborative behavior, however, the gap continues. Just as student teachers fall back on didactic modes of instruction in the practicum, despite learning about cooperative learning in their classes, so too do administrators come to reject visions of collaborative leadership and adopt traditional, hierarchical patterns of behavior. Why does this happen? What accounts for the continued discrepancy between theory and practice?

For some, the answer lies partially in the internship. As prospective administrators enter the internship, through the formal and informal socialization process, they learn role expectations that may contradict the lessons that are grounded in theory and research. (Daresh & Playko, 1989; Marshall, 1991). These traditional role expectations often contradict the messages conveyed as part of the formal preparation. Encouraged to establish democratic and collaborative relationships with teachers, prospective administrators learn patterns of behavior that reinforce traditional hierarchical and impersonal relationships (Fishbein, 2000; Fishbein & Osterman, 2000).

Recognizing the endurance of these behavioral patterns, is it possible to change? Is it possible to integrate the lessons gained from the formal knowledge base into the organizational life of schools? Osterman (1999) offers a theoretical argument that reflective practice can help to bridge this gap between theory and practice; this research study illustrates that principle and demonstrates its potential value to influence the nature of the socialization process that occurs during the internship.

The Research Process as Reflective Practice

As indicated above, this research project was designed to identify the messages that interns receive about the relationship between teachers and administrators and specifically to see if and how those messages influenced the gap between teachers and administrators. When the project began, it was not conceptualized as an experiment in reflective practice. That the research process facilitated reflective practice became clear as the project advanced.

Reflective practice is a professional development strategy that aims to create behavioral change through a process that explores and contrasts theory and practice. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) place reflective practice in a constructivist paradigm and describe it as an experiential

In Spring 1997, concurrent with their internships, nine administrative candidates--all women but differing in age, ethnicity, and school experience--volunteered to participate in a research project focusing on the structural, cultural, political, and symbolic differences that divide teachers and administrators. Through an on-going series of individual interviews, focus group discussions, and journal entries, the pre-service administrators, participating as co-researchers, collected and shared their observations regarding the primary research question: what messages do interns receive about the relationship between teachers and administrators? While the study yielded interesting information on this question (Fishbein, 2000; Fishbein & Osterman, 2000), the purpose of this paper is to examine this research process as an exercise in reflective practice and to illustrate its impact in connecting theory and practice in the internship.

Conceptual Framework

Establishing the relevance of theory for practice in the context of an administrative preparation program is a challenge that has confronted the field for years. There may be "nothing more practical than a good theory," but there are few students of educational administration and leadership who are convinced. Alumni of educational administration programs typically report that their formal study had little relevance to their practice, and cite theory as particularly irrelevant. Students in educational administration programs typically reject the lessons of research as impractical or inapplicable often because they lack validity in the context of their experience. Some students, for example, neither see nor accept the reality of problems that researchers describe despite extensive supporting data. Others accept the problem but reject research-based strategies. Still others endorse the proposed alternatives but perceive change as impossible in their own rigid and hostile environments. The challenge for the professor of educational administration, then, is to bridge this gap – to enable students to see the formal knowledge base as a legitimate, valid, and crucial resource for administrators who want to be change agents in their schools.

This problem is particularly important in the context of the internship. The internship, ostensibly, is a time that enables the prospective administrator to integrate theory and practice as they apply lessons from the classroom in the "real world" of school administration (Allen & Stacy, 1989; Bratlien, 1993; Morgan, Gibbs, Hertzog, & Wylie, 1997; Stover, 1990). Unfortunately, research about the internship suggests that the reality falls far short of this ideal

learning cycle consisting of four stages: experience, observation and analysis, re-conceptualization, and experimentation. With its focus on professional development, a practice-based experience typically provides the stimulus for the learning cycle to begin. Confronted with a troublesome or surprising event, the practitioner steps back to examine the experience looking at intentions, actions, and outcomes. In the process of observing and analyzing this experience, additional dimensions of the problem emerge. These problems -defined as a discrepancy between intended and actual behavior or between goals and actual outcomes- act as the stimulus to learning. Confronted by an awareness that actions are not consistent with values or that actions are ineffective in achieving stated goals, the professional seeks for new understanding and new strategies. The new ideas that emerge in this process then become hypotheses to be tested in action. Through successful experience, new behaviors and ideas are then integrated into patterns of action. In essence, reflective practice is an action research process where the researcher(s) identify a problem, gather additional data, and, with the new insights emerging from analysis of the data, develop an action plan. With implementation, assessment, and continued refinement of the plan, the cycle of reflective practice continues. The following section describes the research process within this framework of reflective practice.

Problematic Experience

This research study, like reflective practice, began with a problem. In the initial meetings with the interns, the researcher explained that, historically, deep divisions that are reflected in and maintained by structural, cultural, political, and symbolic differences mark the relationship between teachers and administrators. Their task was to identify messages that they received from teachers and administrators that would help to explain this problem.

As originally articulated by Argyis and Schon (1974) the reflective practice model focused primarily on professional knowledge and practice. Recognizing the often under-appreciated wealth of practitioner knowledge, the authors encouraged practitioners to identify problems from their own practice and to explore their own beliefs and knowledge to develop a deeper understanding of issues and to identify productive solutions. There was no explicit discussion of the role of the formal knowledge base. Osterman (1999), however, discusses the important role that theory and research can play as a source of problems and as a resource throughout the process. In this case, the problem was a presented one, drawn from the research. It was also a problem that was eminently personal because each of the interns had begun to experience a change in their relationships with their teacher colleagues and their administrative supervisors as they began to assume the mantle of the administrative aspirant. They were engaged; this was a meaningful problem.

Observation

The role of the participants was to observe their internship experience carefully, gathering information about the type of messages that they received that would negatively impact teacher-administrator relationships. During this three-semester period, the participants met frequently as a group to share their observations. In their position as interns, they were in the literally caught in the middle with one leg (and an ear) in each camp. Now that the interns had made a decision to become administrators, they needed to learn the rules; and both groups, teachers and administrators, seemed to play an active role in the socialization process communicating role-related assumptions and expectations.

What did they learn? First of all, both teachers and administrators reaffirmed that there was indeed a sharp line dividing teachers and administrator. As interns, they experienced themselves being rejected from one culture as they were accepted by the other and it was clear that to become an administrator meant literally severing ties to their former culture. Teachers and administrators could not be friends. As their supervisors began to open up, share information, and admit the prospective administrators to their group, the interns began to experience rejection from their current peer group. Their teacher colleagues would no longer join them for lunch and wouldn't risk being seen talking to them. The interns were described as "traitors". They were becoming one of "them", and "they" weren't to be trusted. The administrative supervisors reinforced this message of unyielding and impenetrable boundaries; and the interns repeatedly heard that, regardless of what they did, they should expect that teachers would hate them, and this dislike would make them stronger.

The message from both groups was that "they" were not to be trusted. This basic assumption established the ground rules for interaction between the two groups. They needed to protect themselves and they were to do this by distancing themselves, both physically and emotionally. They would avoid contact and restrict communication, relying on formal correspondence where possible. They would be polite but distant, never letting down the walls enough to share information or emotions freely. As one intern also learned by listening to a conversation about a newly appointed administrator, failure to establish distance, to "let go of those teachers who he was so pal-ly, pal-ly with", undermined confidence in their ability. They were neither to give information nor to ask for any. As they were admitted into the inner sanctum, they were told that there were "things that teachers simply couldn't know." Information withheld could involve anticipated changes in assignments, complaints from parents, or an evaluation that was discussed among the administrative staff but not shared with the teacher.

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Similarly, the interns were counseled not to seek teacher input. Don't tell and don't ask. Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) describe the norms of isolation and individualism that characterize schools and prevent the development of truly collaborative cultures; and here, caught in the middle, the interns were able to observe both teachers and administrators conveying the normative expectations that reinforce this cultural pattern.

These strategies reinforced the boundaries between the two cultures and the interns quickly learned that teachers and administrators inhabited different and separate worlds and that these worlds were inherently unequal. Administrators have power and teachers don't; administrators are " bosses" while teachers are "workers." Essentially, the "administrator" was in charge; the "teacher" was not and messages from both groups suggested that administrators were expected to use their authority, or "flex their muscles" as one intern described it, and do the job. The interns were not specifically told to exclude teachers from the decision process but the "rule" became apparent as they observed principals making decisions independently.

The interns observed the administrators making decisions and issuing directives unilaterally. Watching and hearing stories about administrator-teacher interactions and through their own efforts to interact with teacher colleagues in their new "quasi" administrative roles, the interns also observed and experienced teacher resistance to administrative overtures. In a first meeting with a new faculty, for example, a principal asked teachers to describe their vision for the school and was confronted by complete silence until one of the teachers asked him what he was doing "asking US that question". In another situation, an intern was trying to resolve a scheduling problem and was stunned when teachers complained about all of the options but refused to help resolve the problem. Initially, the interns were surprised to experience teacher resistance even in fairly mundane matters, but gradually came to expect it. Interns would be told to "just get it done", suggesting that they should expect resistance and simply use whatever means necessary.

As a group, they learned different ways of "getting it done." Some administrators would be blatant about their use of power, for example, threatening a teacher with a transfer if she couldn't go along with "what *I* am doing" or assuring the Board of Education that he would "get rid of the old wood." Others would simply make decisions and refuse to listen to objections or suggestions. As one intern explained about her supervisor: "She's very opinionated and gives a lot of directives. In light of shared decision making, you're supposed to get people on board, but she doesn't. She doesn't at all. She knows what she wants, she knows how she wants her school to be, and she tells everyone what to do," including pick the teachers to be on the school wide planning team.

Although, in general, the relationship between teachers and administrators was marked by a pattern of separation and mistrust, there were differences in degree. In several situations, teachers had very favorable views of their administrators. In these situations, the administrators could draw from an "emotional bank account." One supervisor, for example, let on to her teachers that she was experiencing stress in dealing with central office mandates as a means to garner the teachers' support for a new initiative. In this situation, and in others, the teachers were willing to support the administrator both because the administrator had supported them and also because they wanted to protect the current status. " They see the principal as being stressed by her superiors and they're protecting. They want to help her 'cause they don't want to lose her." As a teacher commented. "Well, you know what's going to happen. We don't get those scores up, they're gonna get (principal) out of here. What are we gonna end up with?" The fear of a worse administrator was always present. This form of interaction: one hand washing another, or quid pro quo, was part of the game and both teachers and administrators knew the rules.

Ostensibly, administrators emphasized the importance of equity: to maintain peace, it was important to treat teachers equally and avoid differential treatment, including recognition of good work. One intern was sending out little congratulatory notes, but the principal told her "DON'T SINGLE ANYBODY OUT. Don't ever single anybody out because you like what they're doing." In practice, however, there were repeated instances where the administrator or teacher would extend special treatment in exchange for something now or later. Administrators would bend the rules for some teachers but not for others, criticize some and not criticize others, delegate power to some but not others. In this game of quid pro quo, the price for the favors was compliance: "I will overlook your lateness if you comply with me in other matters." Through these exchanges, the administrator and teachers accrued credit in a metaphorical account. Sometimes these exchanges involved the whole faculty, as in one situation where a principal adamantly refused to turn the faculty lounge into a classroom to address a space problem. Two months later, the teachers led by the union rep volunteered to give up the space on an interim basis. Having access to this additional classroom clearly met the teachers' needs; but in this instance, in response to the principal's support, they addressed the principal's needs and became part of the solution. Interestingly, one of the interns' referred to this as an "emotional bank account." When teachers and administrators recognized what was important to the other, there was a credit to the account. When emotional needs were not addressed, however, the door would be closed, literally and figuratively, as in one instance where the teachers did not rally to support an initiative that was important to the principal.

Analysis

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This data gathering phase of the research process facilitated reflective practice. While the focus group meetings served as a means for the primary researcher to gather data, the data collection process itself fostered reflection or analysis on the part of the interns. As they presented their observations, they began to see the situation in new ways. They became more aware of the relationship between administrators and teachers and they became co-researchers, seeking a deeper understanding of the process and its implications for their own behavior. With each meeting, they brought additional observational data; and, as discussion continued, the analyses deepened and participants began to develop and test hypotheses about the dynamics of this relationship.

In reflective practice, one gathers data about practice in an effort to develop a deeper understanding of the problem from an organizational and personal perspective and, more importantly, to begin to identify the "theories-in-use" that shape behavior. To develop a deeper understanding of the problem, we examine these actions or practice from several perspectives. One lens is theory, both personal and formal: are these behaviors consistent with our personal beliefs about good practice (espoused theory) and are these behaviors consistent with what the research tells us about good practice? A second lens is pragmatic: what are the effects of these behaviors and are they desirable? Discrepancies between theory and practice or between intended outcomes and actual outcomes can be the stimulus to reexamine theory and practice (Osterman, 1999). In this situation, there was no effort to analyze the data systematically from these different perspectives, but through their preparation program, all of these different sources of data were already in place and enriched the dialogue.

As part of their formal preparation, for example, the interns had begun shaping their administrative platforms early in the program and continued to revise them in each subsequent semester. To prepare these statements required them to articulate their espoused theories regarding school leadership. Through their course work, they had an opportunity to explore the literature on school leadership. As participants in this research process, they carefully examined practice and outcomes. The analysis of the data from these multiple perspectives deepened the interns' sense that the behaviors that they had observed were indeed problematic.

In general, there was a consistency between the formal theory that defined good practice and their personal goals. Shaped by their own idealism, they offered a vision of teachers and administrators working in collaborative and collegial ways to improve instruction for students. While some of them had positive role models in their background, many brought recollections of administrators who were not. In contrast with these isolated and authoritarian administrators, they envisioned themselves as transformational leaders, stimulating collaboration and facilitating

organizational change. They wanted to create a more collegial environment where administrators and teachers would work together to meet student needs and one where administrators would be more involved, more around to help. They wanted to be instructional leaders who would excite teachers, "help them to write their own curricula, and really have the say..." "You know how many times I've seen fine teachers squashed by the administration? ...And I want to be the opposite." They wanted to engage teachers in teaching and ask for their input. From their experience, they thought that good administrators were hard to find: "When you hit a good administrator, it's like you just hit Lotto;" but they hoped to be those good administrators. They wanted to be humanistic, knowledgeable, skilled at politics and skilled at interpersonal skills. They wanted to challenge the process, earn the respect of their staffs, inspire a shared vision, and enable others to act by listening, offering recognition and support, and modeling. They didn't want to forget that they were teachers when they became administrators, they didn't want to forget how teachers feel. They wanted to bridge the gap. While there was a consistency between personal and formal theory, the practice that they observed in many cases offered a sharp contrast and raised serious questions for them about the feasibility of realizing their vision.

In the discussions that took place throughout the internship, the interns developed a deeper and more balanced perspective on the teacher-administrator gap. Because of their unique perspective, straddling but immersed in both roles and both cultures, the quasi-administrators were able to see the picture from both sides. They began to see teacher and administrator relationships as divided and culturally distinct but also as separate dimensions of what is nonetheless a tightly woven cloth. They saw teachers and administrators acting in certain ways, many of which seemed proscribed through the socialization process, and they saw the counterproductive if unintended effect of these behaviors and their consequences for the individuals and for the school as a whole. From a pragmatic perspective, they realized that administrators and teachers were adopting dysfunctional behaviors that were defeating their ability to achieve the goals that they espoused. They also began to unravel teachers' and administrators' theories-in-use.

Theories-in-use

Reflective practice builds on the premise that behavior is shaped by deeply held beliefs and that articulating them is an important prerequisite to behavioral change. The ultimate goal of the analytic process, then, is to develop an understanding of these theories-in-use. Messages from teachers and administrators were direct as well as indirect. In some cases, the interns inferred motive from behaviors; in other cases, the rationale for the proscribed behaviors was explicit and unambiguous. They were deeply and personally involved with this research question and,

wanting to understand the dynamics of the process, they searched for connections. At one level, they saw these behaviors as emotionally based reactions, the intensity of which was complicated by organizational conditions. At another level, they realized that these behaviors both reflected and reinforced underlying assumptions.

There were two key beliefs or assumptions that most directly affected the teacher-administrator relationship. The first dealt with the nature of their roles in the organization. Essentially, both teachers and administrators accepted the inherent inequality of the role. They believed that administrators are superiors (bosses) and exercise consistent with traditional bureaucratic principles regarding the distribution of authority and expertise. They are expected to control. Teachers, on the other hand, are subordinates and without formal authority. The assumption is that they will be controlled. The second was that "they" could not be trusted. If you trusted "them", they would betray you. The analysis that emerged was that these assumptions influenced behavior. People acted in ways that were consistent with their expectations. These behaviors then validated the assumptions and reinforced the same type of behavior. Organizational assumptions affected their personal relationships and vice versa.

Administrators have power. Teachers and administrators both strongly conveyed the message and underlying assumption that "administrators have the power." Administrators conveyed the message that they (as administrators) were expected to control teachers and might have to "flex their muscles" or use other strategies to avoid conflict and achieve control. Administrators assumed that they were in charge and that they were expected to make decisions about what teachers do. While teachers were subordinates in the school, school administrators, caught in the middle, were themselves subordinates in the district: " 'Never forget' one administrator commented all the time is that 'you are MIDDLE MANAGEMENT. YOU HAVE NO REAL POWER TO DO ANYTHING except implement the decisions of those above you'." Administrators also had a sense of powerlessness relative to their own superviors and the interns perceived that their actions were often responses to pressure from above.

From these superiors in the hierarchy were frequent references to the expectation that school administrators were expected to establish their power. Administrators would not be hired unless they were perceived as "strong", that is, able to control teachers. One district passed over a qualified female from within the district, because, as a teacher in the same school, they doubted her ability to regain control of the teachers after the current laissez-faire principal retired. Administrators quickly learned that establishing positive relationships with teachers would jeopardize their position. One intern, for example, reported that district administrators were concerned that the district's hopes to "get some new blood" were backfiring as reports filtered

back that the young newly hired administrator was being too friendly with teachers in the department. The intern described conversations about how to deal with the new person and get him right back in shape.

Administrators were expected to "control" and would do so using a variety of strategies. The interns reported examples of administrative actions that "justified" teacher's negative perceptions of their administrators. Describing the situation in her school where teacher-administrator relationships are "terrible," the intern explained that "You never know what he's going to do next. He may come in your room, and you could be doing the most wonderful lesson, and he'll go back and he'll FIND something in that lesson to criticize, if you're on that 'B' list. If you're on the 'A'list, you could be sitting at your desk reading the paper when he walks in, and somehow something good will come out of it." Another intern, also describing the lack of trust in the building, said that the administrator's word is "garbage." In response, "When she says something, it's like, they're standing there laughing,..looking around [rolling their eyes."

Another intern described her supervisor as "two-faced" meaning "she tells certain staff members this and does what they want, but when others ask her, it's like "Do what you can for ME but I'm not gonna do anything for YOU." "Those who play the game, get away with things, those who don't, don't."

In one school, over a two-year period of continuing contract negotiations, teachers had neglected bulletin boards. The administrator sent out a memo saying that she expected them to be nice. The day before the parent-teacher conferences, the teachers heard a "RIPPING in the hallway, and all of the custodians are up on ladders taking down everybody's bulletin boards." As the intern, also a teacher explained, she could understand why teachers would be upset. "Rather than come in and say, 'What are you guys doing today?'..everything was just thrown out. Nobody tried to save borders, posters, anything." The teachers were also upset because the principal failed to announce the end of open house, leaving teachers to cope with parents who wanted to stay late or came late. While these may seem like small things, they were things that hurt the teachers and provoked not direct resistance, but covert attacks. These types of behavior eroded trust and confirmed teachers' perceptions of administrators as unreasonable and insensitive "bosses." The administrative actions could also be seen as reactions to teacher actions or, in this situation, inaction. These behaviors, in turn, reinforce assumptions and prompt additional defensive reactions.

> I've gotten the message (from my administrator) that he feels that teachers have screwed him and I've also gotten the message from teachers by the heat of their

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responses to some very simple requests from him that they feel that they've been screwed before, and they're just not going to let it happen again. So there's a lot of anger there, and it's not over the issues that are under discussion, because they're really NOT that big." 248

Teachers are powerless. Teachers, too, accepted this definition of the role and assumed that administrators had the power and that they, as subordinates did not. They were used to hearing administrators tell them what to do, and when confronted with a challenge or new directive, they turned on the administrators, often with anger and frustration. One of the interns, for example, vividly recalled a teacher venting to her about having to prepare special education children in her inclusion class for new state exams. The teacher, she reported was "literally in my face yelling 'what am I going to do with these students?' She going off, she was venting, she was having a temper tantrum."

They also resented what they viewed as meaningless directives that failed to address their needs or recognize their effort. Preparing for a conference day, for example, a teacher raised her hand after getting the agenda. "I'm OFFENDED!' she says, 'because we've DONE this three times in the last three years", continuing to explain that she had been on two previous committees that had exactly the same task and was now being asked to do it again.

Even when administrators didn't use coercive power, teachers were aware that they could. This perception of themselves as subject to the whim of administrators created a vulnerability that maintained the gap. The evaluation process, in particular, contributed to anxiety and uncertainty. As one intern commented, "one of my colleagues has been teaching for 20 years, and she was getting observed last week, I mean she was having a fit! And I'm like 'come on, you've got it down! What are you worrying about! Your kids love you!' "I know, but I'm so NERVOUS.'" As another intern explained: "because she is so much my superior, she could make my life hell, 'cause I could end up at any point, if I annoy her, teaching in three schools, and being paper-worked to death, and being written up poorly. That's really there. That really dampens whatever relationship we have. Because my livelihood hinges on her opinion of me...And this person, this administrative person, on a whim, can just take it all away from them." (244)

In some cases, this sense of vulnerability led to resistance; in other cases, like the following, to a grudging compliance. A teacher, who was censured at a faculty meeting for voicing disapproval of a new program, even though "fuming" about the way she had been treated, went to see the principal and apologized. Her security had been threatened, the intern reported, by some anticipated grade transfers, and she felt that she needed to make a "deposit" in the account.

"I see that happening a lot," she explained, "with people he has offended going back. It's almost like an abuse relationship, you know, like you hear in marriages." Finding themselves without formal power, they feel they have to adopt a compliant role to protect themselves but this creates even more antagonism on their part and further encourages withdrawal and passive resistance.

They were tired of having solutions imposed on them without their input. As with a particular inclusion plan, "the model was taken from somewhere and the administration said, 'This is what you're doing, and this is how you're doing it, and this is what we're doing. It's just done, no questions asked... just run with it." On the other hand, feeling powerless to effect change or simply assigning the responsibility for change to the administrators, they would reject administrative overtures to involve them, maintaining role expectations. One administrator who "would do ANYTHING" for the teachers, had been working with a small group of teachers and they had come up with a good idea. He got really excited about it and, anticipating that the other teachers would also get excited, he suggested that they present it to the faculty meeting. " 'We can really have fun with this project,' he said, "and he got up in front of the faculty, and it was like they had a TOTALLY negative response to him."

Both teachers and administrators internalized the definition of their respective roles and acted accordingly. Teachers assumed that administrators were in charge and that they were powerless. Teachers assumed that administrators would be heavy handed and unresponsive to their interests. To gain some sense of control, they resisted, regardless of the nature of the initiative, or played the political game of quid pro quo. On occasions when administrators would try to change the dynamics and engage teachers in collaborative activity, teachers resisted. This resistance confirmed administrators' beliefs that they needed to rely on traditional forms of organizational control. Teachers' resistance and administrators' determination to overcome it seemed to form a never–ending cycle.

The interns also identified a number of organizational conditions that placed additional strain on the administrator/teacher relationship. Contract negotiations, for example, were unusually stressful and aggravated even good relationships. As in the example above, teachers used various means to protest unresolved disputes and administrators retaliated. In one school, teachers were almost relieved that an administrator that they liked was leaving because they felt that they could be "horrible to the new person and maybe put enough pressure on everyone so that we'll finally get a contract." Just as administrators would try to get compliance by making teachers' lives miserable, teachers used the same set of strategies.

In the backlash from unsuccessful contract negotiations, no one was immune. A new principal was doing an OK job, if not a great one, an intern reported. "I think there are things that she should be doing that she's not doing" but, following a good principal was a 'VERY hard act to follow.'" The new assistant principal, however, was reported to be doing an outstanding job. Nonetheless, in the privacy of the faculty room, teachers "just TRASH them!' coming up with stupid little things to complain about. Everyone in the whole district, she reported, had lost their patience for administrators. Even if the former successful principal came back to the district now, "he wouldn't be successful," she predicted, "because no one would even give him a chance."

Perceptions of hiring practices even in other districts led teachers to be suspicious of building administrators. Teachers who saw jobs going to less qualified candidates perceived that administrators were hired less because of what they could do and more because of whom they knew. This "cronyism", they believed, created a comfort level and assured the district administrators that the new hire would comply with expectations.

"They" are not to be trusted. Further complicating the process was what seemed to be a deeply embedded sense of mutual mistrust. This belief that "they" can't be trusted grew out of their organizational experience and reinforced role expectations. The perception of mistrust also led to the development of behavioral norms that reaffirmed the validity of the original assumptions.

The experience of teachers and administrators in these organizational relationships took an emotional toll and affected the quality of their personal relationships. Administrators' efforts to collaborate with teachers were met with resistance. Teachers' perceived that administrators' were insensitive to their needs. It was not difficult for the interns to see how the administrators and teachers could be really "hurt" by these experiences and how these experiences would lead to the patterns of withdrawal and retribution that they had observed:

> It's like in any relationship. You open up, you're opening up to hurt. And what's the easiest way to shield the hurt? Become impersonal. I mean we do it in so many other relationships so why should this be different? So if an administrator has been burned, or feels that he or she has been burnt, they're so disappointed. So then, they take themselves away from the situation and be pushed into the bureaucracy: I'm going to punish you and you're going to be in at 8:15.

Not all administrators adopted these retaliatory behaviors, but there was an element of distrust even among those who had very positive relationships with the

teachers. One intern, for example, described her principal as one who has a "true and genuine belief that the people who are working for him are going to come up with the best solution to any problem, and it will probably be superior to any solution that he comes up with on his own." As the internship progressed, however, she began to sense ambivalence. "He advises me to be careful: 'Don't trust them.' And I must always remember that there is a tension necessary between teachers and administrators."

> Behind this ambivalence was a history of bad experiences:
> He said that he started this job thinking that he and the teachers were going to be a team that sat down together to make decisions and provide support for each other, and they would all 'sail away on the good ship Lollipop'; but he learned very quickly that that was impossible because they pulled the rug out from under him every time he tried to bring them on board with any new idea.

Perceiving their separateness, both groups maintained distance, literally avoiding contact and communication. This norm of silence and this lack of communication prevented clarification or correction. There was little direct communication between groups about school policies or practices. Administrators made decisions unilaterally or simply passed on directives from above, and teachers grudgingly implemented them, often lacking the resources to do so but keeping their complaints and frustrations to themselves. No one asked and no one told.

Both groups adopted an attitude of stoicism and held in their feelings. While they would openly communicate their anger, frustration, and hurt within their respective groups, they withheld verbal communication between the groups. In this silence, there were no mechanisms for correction or improvement, no procedures to facilitate problem solving. Since neither group expressed these feelings openly with the other group, there was no possibility for change or forgiveness.

Reconceptualization

At the beginning of the research project, Fishbein (2000) interviewed the interns to gather insight into their anticipatory socialization, specifically to explore the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and their relationship that the interns had developed prior to beginning formal administrative preparation. Several themes emerged. The interns defined themselves as good teachers but distinguished themselves from many of their colleagues who were perceived as apathetic, negative, and resistant to change. They were also critical of their workplaces, particularly the isolation and lack of opportunity to work with other adults in any meaningful

way, and felt that teachers' preferences for isolation, as a means to gain personal control contributed to this climate.

They also reported having seen many of the same issues that emerged later throughout the internship. The interns were very aware that the majority of teachers did not trust administrators, but again they distinguished themselves from their colleagues. They felt sympathetic to administrators, surprised at how teachers would treat administrators; and, to a certain extent, felt that the way administrators treated teachers was justifiable. "Anybody who has to deal with what they have to deal with", the way that "these teachers, my coworkers, my people, my peers...treated administrators – the lack of respect. And I felt that's why they probably feel the way they do about teachers. What we give them, we get back. What you give is what you get."

They were critical of some administrators, particularly those who were distant from and uninvolved with teachers and unavailable to identify or address their needs. Nonetheless, their perspective at this juncture tended to be more sensitive towards administrators than to teachers. They had characterized the teacher culture as one that needed improvement and had more positive views of administrators than did their teacher colleagues. They were also seeking administrative positions as a means to change. They themselves viewed teachers as an obstacle to change: "teachers sometimes can get caught in a rut and become stifled. And they don't want to hear about change. And that's where I would like to make a difference, by going into administration." They wanted power to create change and "make a difference" but they hoped to exercise that power in ways different from those they had observed in the past.

<u>It's Not Personal</u>

By the conclusion of the internship and the research project, the interns had reconceptualized the problem. They now had a deeper understanding that the gap between teachers and administrators was deeply rooted in the bureaucracy. They began to see why administrators acted in controlling ways and why teachers were resistant. They understood the way that role assumptions and pressure from the system affected their behavior. "All you have to do is say the word 'administrator' and all of a sudden they're got warning lights up, and their antennas are going. They've KNOWN you for five years, but now, 'Oh, my God, she stepped outta line.'" They understood, in a very personal way, the lessons that they learned in their first course on organizations, that the system, whether through its role expectations and distribution of power, or simply because of organizational policies and procedures, establishes certain boundaries that shape behavior. Sometimes the job requires administrators " to do things that THEY don't believe is the best thing to do and that doesn't mean they're against the teachers." (258) Similarly, teacher

actions are often responses to justifiable complaints rather than a personal vendetta against the administrator.

With this understanding, they had a more balanced perspective; and this enabled them to make distinctions between the person and the role and to understand how roles sometimes shape behavior in dysfunctional ways.

> I think [the principal's] agenda is to do the best thing for kids, and I think the teachers' agenda is to do the best thing for kids, but (the principal's) secondary agenda is proving that he can make teachers be accountable, and the teachers' second agenda is to prove that they can't be pushed around. And so those two secondary agendas come up against each other and they end up focusing on the secondary agendas instead of the primary agenda. I think he believes that their agenda is to hurt him. And he has to protect himself, if he's going to survive. It's a very, VERY uncomfortable posture to be in, and it's very difficult to operate out of that posture any way other than the way he behaves...He is very often caught behind this pressure of wondering sort of who's gonna get him from which direction next. 248

They were also particularly sensitive to the way that the distribution of power and authority in the system affected behavior.

> In watching all of the administrators, I see the superintendent getting tense and nervous about whether or not he's complying well enough with Board demands. I see the assistant superintendent even going as far as saying in meetings, 'Well, this is what the superintendent told me to do.' And then I hear the principals saying to the teachers, 'Well, this is what the assistant superintendent told me to do.' And the teachers are at the bottom of that line. And I can see why, when something is coming down that way, the teachers push back because they've got the weight of all those other people above them trying to meet everybody else's expectations." 250.

When they began their internships, many of them were skeptical about the possibility of enacting any of the leadership strategies that they were reading about and discussing in their classes. In the light of what they had seen and were now experiencing, it seemed unrealistic, impractical. At the conclusion of the program, however, even though, and perhaps because they had a deeper understanding of the administrator/teacher relationship, they were more optimistic. In their words, the gap had narrowed and they now perceived it as a malleable problem.

Having observed the impact of this division and a deeper understanding of its dynamics, they now believed more firmly that a positive relationship was important. 'They need one! They need a supportive, collegial relationship where they learn from each other. Principals can learn from teachers! And teachers can learn from their administrators." They believed that administrative leadership was important in establishing positive relationships: " A good administrator can unite a divided staff" (243). "The administrator has to set the tone, develop...or change the culture of the school."

Because they could now empathize with teachers and administrators the gap seemed perceptually smaller. Recognizing the systemic nature of the problem made the problem seem more amenable to change. They were optimistic: "the relationship between administrators and teachers does not have to be as terse or tenuous or tense – only 'T' words – as it is, or as I have seen it, or as I perceive it to be right now, where I am and where I've been. The administrator and teachers CAN have a relationship that's a working, collaborative, whatever else you want to call it, relationship, that provides, you know, a fabulous education for the kids." (266)

Don't take it personally; recognize and address human needs

Seeing people caught in the system, the interns began to develop new mental models for interpreting what they saw. Throughout the research process, the interns noted that teachers and administrators often interpreted the actions of others as personal attacks. With their new understanding, they recognized that these matters were seldom personal: "All of these little things that people get so personal about really AREN'T that personal! ...they didn't drop the computer club because they didn't like you, they dropped the computer club 'cause they have to buy new social studies textbooks." (259)

They realized that people's actions and reactions were based on their perceptions of the role and the system as a whole rather than the person and developed a new theory-in-use: We're all human and a related action strategy: don't take it personally.

They focused on the fact that teachers and administrators are human, with human failings and human needs and realized that they shouldn't jump to conclusions. When "the teacher snaps at a kid, or snaps at a principal, it doesn't mean that they're a bad teacher. It means they had a bad day." In some cases, as they had observed, by failing to recognize the impact of policies and practices, the system itself caused these bad days. Knowing that "There are too many aspects of the system that deny basic needs," they hoped to be more tolerant and understanding of these reactions.

By understanding that anger and complaints many times grew out of personal or job-related experiences, the interns hoped to be better able to withstand the urge to use their power in inappropriate ways and to listen more carefully as a means to identify and address the underlying problems:

> It is VERY tempting when I am hurt to retaliate. And to fantasize the ways I can mess with their schedules, because the fact is that there is some degree of power. I mean, we're talking mostly tenured people, so we're not talking about depriving anybody of their livelihood, but boy, can you make their life miserable!

They also recognized the need not simply to remedy problems but to go out of their way to address human needs. They realized that teachers need to be appreciated and secure:

> People need to feel that they helped develop something, help bring something about.
>
> No one likes to be insecure, everyone wants to know where they stand. Everyone wants to be respected, and appreciated, and admired, and some people, even the ones who say, 'Just leave me alone' and just shut their door, they don't mean it. They really don't.

They also recognized that often these needs could be addressed with little effort:

> It's a very loveless profession, and you just want someone to say, you know, 'Good job!'"...I think that those little things – they're SO little, they're just these tiny little itty-bitty things, but they really just give you so much mileage."

By recognizing human needs, they hoped to minimize the gap. As one intern commented:

> I think if there was more recognition of the fact that schools are just big bunches of human beings who are doing something that makes them very, very vulnerable all the time, and therefore, let's make sure that they all feel taken care of by SOMEBODY all day, then I think there would be much less likelihood for people to cluster together on the other side of a great divide. (257)

Experimentation

In reflective practice, reconceptualization provides the basis for experimentation. A new understanding of the problem leads you to think about practice in new ways. These new ways of thinking provide guidelines for action; and in the experimentation phase, the reflective practitioner would begin to implement and assess these new strategies. The purpose of this research was simply to develop a deeper understanding of how the relationship between teachers and administrators was forged during the internship. There was no intent to change practice. It was only as the study progressed that we recognized the extent to which this process was

engaging the interns in reflective practice. They had gathered data and developed a deeper understanding of the problem and this understanding had led them to develop the essentials of a plan including new action theories and new strategies that they felt would make a difference and support the development of a more positive relationship. At the same time, however, the research project itself did not focus on experimentation so we have limited data regarding the ultimate question: did this process effect a change in behavior. The data we do have suggests cautious optimism.

Although the interns observed these behaviors and were able to distance themselves somewhat, they were not immune from the power of the socialization process. One intern, for example, described an interaction with a colleague. Responding to her friend's observation that she didn't seem to be having " fun" in the internship, the intern mentioned that she felt as though she had been "segregated." The teacher responded " Well, that's what happens." The intern later commented that while she had wanted to continue the conversation, expressing her feelings about how this particular friend had been treating her, she hadn't. Whether her behavior changed as the study progressed or later, we don't know.

They viewed secrecy rules as problematic: "I'm realizing that when you create a feeling of secrecy, then the rumors begin. You know, people are wondering what's really happening and so non-truths begin to spread. And it's just not healthy." Yet they found themselves conforming to these rules and pleased to be trustworthy: "Why do I feel first of all that I can't speak openly to my colleagues? I feel like I wouldn't DARE breathe a word of anything that I saw happening behind those, those closed doors, because I know that's how THIS group of administrators likes it to be." And when the interns assured the administrators that they could be trusted, they were affirmed: "Well, it's good that you feel that way because, you know, there are just so many things they can't know about." If they felt pressure during this phase of the socialization process, it is likely that the pressure to conform will be even greater as they actually assume administrative roles.

At the same time, there were several instances like the following where their new understanding enabled them to re-frame a problem and develop a different and more productive response.

> When they come to me and they say – the union rep comes and uses the imperial WE – 'WE are all upset because of the following things that happened,' it is very hard to listen to because a lot of it really is nit-picky stuff. But I found the real issue, and the real issue has nothing to do with any of the things they were complaining about 'They're overwhelmed because our building time (aides) was

> cut dramatically, and we have many, many more kids who are not getting CSE designated aide time. So as a result, there's just not as much help. More problem, less help. And I think THAT'S the real issue. And it's filtering through, with the union reps getting LOTS of complaints from their colleagues. They THEY'RE feeling overwhelmed because they can't teach. They're spending all their time listening to the complaints from the teachers, so by the time they get to US, they're just pulling their hair out!"

How did her new conceptualization of the problem assist her? As she explained, "

> I went home and it would have been very easy for me to just say, 'Well, you know what? I've been working as HARD AS I CAN to make things the way they should be, and if THEY don't appreciate it, well I'll show THEM who's the one in control,' you know. So I did, and I did do that, but I did it to the mirror – the REAL mirror!. And I sat down and said "OK, what's the real issue here?' Because these people clearly are genuinely upset. And then I was able the next day to go in, and meet with them, and say, 'You know, I really thought about everything you said, that I THINK THAT THIS IS A LARGE PART OF THE REAL ISSUE,' and they said, ' You're right. That's the real issue.' But it was very hard.

Recognizing that emotional reactions reflect experiences and needs, they seemed better able to put things in perspective, avoid defensive behavior, and move to the next step.

> I'm finding that the more I remind myself, 'This person is coming from a point of genuine concern. Let's figure out what the REAL concern is, what the real issue is,' the less I feel that {I need to retaliate}. That's a 'how-dare-you-attack-me-and-hurt-me-this-way kind of reaction, and I'm really feeling much more...that I'm part of a very, very large system, and 99% of what I experience has NOTHING to do with ME. Or my behavior. Or anything I've said or done since I walked into that building."

When experimentation leads to positive outcomes, there is more likelihood that the new strategies will become an integral part of behavior. Whether the interns as a group could adopt and sustain new practices is an unknown, but at least one reported success, "I have had three different people say to me, 'It's such a pleasure to talk to you, you never get defensive.'"

They were also more confident in their ability to mend the fences as a result of their involvement in the research project but there were differences. Interns who had had the

opportunity to work with collaborative administrators felt more confident than did those who hadn't. As one explained, she had heard other administrators describing how to do it but she lacked the real-life experience to make her feel confident that she could do it, too.

> So the teacher-administrative relationship for me has been, it's been SCARY on a day-to-day basis...I can't say that my administrator's my mentor and I learned so much from him, and it's unfortunate, because HE'S the one I see EVERY day, I deal with every day, I speak to every day. These other people (visiting professional)s, I may never see again. I can only go based on what I remember from that one visit, based on the notes I may have taken, or, something someone may say, 'Oh, remember when so-and-so did this? You should try that.' Advice from other people. I should be able to see as, as your parents are supposed to say, examples for you growing up...I don't see it from my MAIN person. I don't see it. So, teacher-administrator relationships are something I still have yet to learn about. Even though I'm going through all of this, I still feel I was shortchanged in a way, as far as what I deal with every day.

Those interns whose experience complemented what they had learned from coursework and reflective practice seemed more confident in their ability to address the gap:

> My first internship was out of district, and in that situation, I was working with someone that was well liked, that was an assistant superintendent. In general, in my place of work, those people are just hands-off people that nobody talks to, that are up somewhere in some office, that we really don't hear from. And maybe we get a memo from them every now and then, you know what they look like, but that's about it. And if they're ever walking around the school, EVERYONE knows, because it's like they came out of their cave. My first internship was with someone that was in a completely different situation than that. So for me, I felt like I saw both ends of the spectrum....And people were very comfortable going to her for help and questions...So that through that internship, I was able to see and feel a central office administration that worked very well, and that the teachers felt was there for them. And that was really eye-opening for me....I think it was real important for me to see that in some places central office really DOES care what's going on in the classroom, and really IS interested in seeing what happens with its students and with its teachers, and that

type of thing...This internship has opened my eyes to the fact that there are human beings at central office.

Vicarious experience is no substitute for the real thing.

Conclusion

When the interns entered the program, they came with a vision and a mission. They envisioned themselves as transformational leaders, stimulating collaboration and facilitating organizational change. The preparation program fostered this way of thinking, encouraging them to be creative, visionary leaders and presented it as a realistic but very difficult challenge. Nonetheless, confronted with the literature and their prior socialization experiences, they were tentative about their ability to enact their vision and implement "theory" in their practice. As they began the internship, their resolve weakened further with their observations of dominant organizational norms and the cultural reality. While some had observed leaders who were able to bridge the gap, many hadn't.

The research question framed their inquiry and provided a lens to make meaning of their experience as quasi-administrators. As a process, the goal of reflective practice is change in personal behavior. Consequently, the focus of attention is usually on personal problems and practice. At the same time, however, Osterman (1999) indicates that reflective practice can also begin by examining organizational issues. In this situation, the study was clearly focused on organizational behavior; there was no systematic effort to examine the individual practice of the interns. Yet, through this analysis, the interns began to transfer their learning to their own behavior. As some of the examples above indicate, by examining the assumptions and practice of others, they became very sensitive to their own practice and began to assess and modify their own behavior. They were able to stand back and develop a critical perspective on the socialization process. In the jargon of retail, they became educated consumers. They knew what was happening and they were better able to make informed decisions about the lessons they would learn and apply. By enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of the problem, this sustained and focused exercise in reflective practice served as a prophylactic against the forces that would erode the candidates' vision and mission and maintain the teacher-administrator gap. As Margaret Mead once stated, a clear understanding of the problem prefigures the solution.

The experience also provided some insight into the importance of dialogue and collaboration to stimulate deep and meaningful reflective practice. The open forum required participants to articulate what they implicitly understood from their observations and the dialogic process facilitated the articulation. Journal writing, often described as an important tool for reflective practice, was a required part of the internship experience. While the interns used that

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data to inform their discussion during the seminar, it is interesting to note that the journal entries themselves, while descriptive, were not necessarily "reflective" even though students had received guidelines about reflective strategies. The richness of the dialogic process far exceeded the meaning making of participants in their individual journals. By listening and responding to their shared experiences, which they described vividly – often with the words, phrases, and sentences that they recalled– and by engaging in double-loop learning as they explored not only behavior but the underlying assumptions, the participants developed a new perspective on the gap between teachers and administrators.

When the interns began this study, they were well aware of a gap. By the time they finished the process, they had a far more detailed understanding of how that type of a relationship develops. They clearly saw the difference between the formal theory that they were studying in the classroom and the informal theories that affected behavior in the workplace. They saw adults engaging in power games that distracted them from their primary mission, but because they were now able to trace these behaviors and reactions to roles and power, they were able to develop a different agenda for themselves. With a deeper awareness of the problem, the interns actually turned more to theory and integrated new ideas into their personal agenda. What they had been studying became meaningful and they began to experiment with these behaviors in an effort to circumvent the vicious cycle of action and reaction that they had observed.

Whether their practice will continue to reflect their newly espoused views when they enter new roles and assume the mantle of authority is an unanswered question. What we do know is that because of this opportunity to engage in reflective practice during the internship, they are better aware of and prepared to deal with obstacles they encounter and that this preparation may enable them to better bridge the gap. They had clearly developed a deeper and different understanding of the problem, and through this process, they began to challenged their underlying assumptions and develop new theories to guide their actions.

This experience illustrates a way to utilize the internship experience to foster reflective practice and to deepen the understanding of theory and research in the context of practice. It also demonstrates that reflective practice can as easily grow out of a question grounded in theory and research as from one emanating from personal professional practice. While replicating this type of research in the internship may not be feasible, the study suggests that introducing reflective practice into the internship may be a valuable way to establish linkages between theory and practice. By focusing on discrepancies between theory and practice and by encouraging interns to examine these questions through observation and analysis, preparation programs may be more effective in supporting changes in organizational leadership behavior.

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